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UNCLAS WARSAW 002164

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EUR/NCE TARA ERATH AND MICHAEL SESSUMS  
STATE FOR DRL CHRIS CAMPONOV  
STATE PASS TO USAID DCHA/DG LLOYD FEINBERG

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PROPOSED WARSAW CONFERENCE ON DISABILITIES IN IRAQ  
HITS SOME SNAGS

REF: WARSAW 1517

1. (SBU) Summary. The Polish government sent a letter to USAID Administrator Natsios on April 6 stating that while it supports the idea of an international conference on Iraqi disabled issues in principle, it sees many obstacles to moving ahead with such a conference in Poland at this time due to lack of funds and impending Polish elections. With the Polish national government reluctant to begin organizing the proposed conference, the main U.S. NGO backing the project is now seeking to interest Polish NGOs, private Polish businesses, and the Warsaw municipal government in hosting the event. End summary.

2. (U) On April 27, the Embassy received a courtesy copy of an April 6 letter the head of the National Fund for the Rehabilitation of Disabled People (PFRON) sent to Administrator Natsios of USAID. PFRON is the state agency that implements Polish laws concerning the disabled. The head of PFRON, Roman Sroczynski, signed the letter, which his aide said was cleared by both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Policy.

Begin text of unofficial embassy translation:

April 6, 2005

Dear Mr. Director,

I would like to inform you that on March 30, 2005 consultations were held (initiated by Minister Izabella Jaruga-Nowacka) regarding the proposal of organizing in Warsaw a worldwide conference regarding disabled people from Iraq and their post-conflict situation.

After discussing the complex issues regarding this subject with Minister Jaruga-Nowacka, I would like to present our point of view.

The intention and the idea of organizing such a conference in Warsaw are very positive and need support.

I would like to point out a few obstacles in organizing this conference here due to some problems we are experiencing.

Firstly, the very slow stabilization process in Iraq should be taken into consideration. The current government is a temporary one (until fall of this year). It would be better to organize this conference after a more stable government (a new government) is chosen in order to discuss it in all of its details.

Secondly, there is a lack of obligation from the U.S. administration and other American NGOs in the area of financing this conference. I am disappointed by the lack of a positive response from the American side. I hope that you will be able to convince the U.S. administration to financially participate in organizing this conference. The scale and budget needed for this kind of event should be taken into consideration.

Thirdly, in the budget for this year, the Polish parliament did not forecast any financial means for organizing the conference. This year, presidential, parliamentary, and senatorial elections will take place. Therefore the budget can not be changed. I would like to stress that such an amendment will be possible if the American side will declare an appropriate amount of financial support in organizing the conference.

I hope that you will understand our point of view. I do believe that current difficulties are only temporary and that this very noble idea of involvement of the international society in solving the problems of the disabled people in Iraq will be successfully implemented.

Roman Sroczynski

President

End translation.

13. (SBU) The Ministry of Social Policy privately informed Post on April 27 that its position has not changed since the April 6 letter was sent, and that it is reluctant to move forward with the conference due to the lack of Polish financial resources and the political uncertainty created by

the upcoming Polish national elections. It believes, furthermore, that it would be preferable to have a permanent Iraqi government well in place before such a conference occurs. As a result, the Ministry of Social Policy does not currently intend to move ahead with any planning.

14. (SBU) Based on the hesitant Polish government response, the United States International Council on Disabilities (USICD), the main U.S. NGO supporting the conference, is now looking for support from Polish NGOs and businesses. It believes one possibility would be for the Warsaw municipal government to host this conference, but we have had no indication that the City of Warsaw is interested in supporting this venture.

15. (SBU) Comment. It appears that the Polish national government will not be moving ahead with planning this conference in the foreseeable future. Post will continue to monitor this issue to inform Washington whether USICD's attempts to partner with Polish municipal government to organize the conference are successful. End comment.  
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